

Kessler, Ellen

From: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC [Stephanie.Strength@wdc.usda.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, July 14, 2009 8:32 AM
To: Lilley, Bliss
Cc: Collins, Carly
Subject: FW: CapX 2020 Project
Attachments: capxletter.doc; Reasons to avoid the LeSueur.doc

From: Mrsprchal@aol.com [mailto:Mrsprchal@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2009 10:57 AM
To: Strength, Stephanie - Washington, DC
Subject: CapX 2020 Project

Please read the attached letter regarding the proposed CapX project. Thanks, Jodi Prchal

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B-011-001

This federal scoping process is specific to only the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345-kV project. As such, we have forwarded your comments to the project team dealing with the project with which you have raised concerns.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm>. Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be solicited after its publication.

Reasons to avoid the LeSueur/Rice County Alternate Route (300th St/County Road 28/Rice County 2/60th St) according to the EIS statement and the PUC factors that are considered in route determination:

1. Human Settlements
 - a. Would destroy the rural integrity of the area.
 - b. Cultural Resources-Many century plus family farms would be impacted...many go back to the founding fathers of this area. Would also impact a cemetery in Rice County along Rice County 2. Landowners are proud of their land, many having had this land passed down for generations with the intent to continue to do so. Although CapX claims to have followed section lines/fence lines that really does not mean much since it is still not following any existing right of way and would impact still impact the landowners on both sides and in many cases it is going in the middle of fields.
 - c. Land Use-The alternate line runs close to towns that are growing and will continue to do so. Developing of the land may be inevitable and a high voltage line would greatly devalue the land values that could have been much higher if there was no line. Also when non existing right of ways are used the entire right of way must be given by the landowner and in addition many of these locations would be affected as far as buildability in the future. In some locations the only feasible place to ever expand the operation or build a home is right where the line would be. This is just not fair if there are existing right of ways that can be used.
 - d. Socioeconomics-The alternate lines runs not only near but through many businesses. There are at least two daycares, many acres of farm fields (which when having to go around poles requires more time, spray, seed, and compaction of soil reducing the yield as well as possible breaking of field tiles), Kajer Organic Dairy Operation, working hay field operations, buffalo ranch, horse ranches, Pieper Dairy Operation, a woodworking business (Nytes), organic gardens and poultry operations which require electric fence, etc.
 - e. Community Services
 - f. Utility Systems-The line would pass through several gas pipelines-(south of New Prague and near Lonsdale). As in the case of Section 15/16 Lanesburgh township there is already an MVEC Electric line on the west side of Hwy 13/21 but on the east side of the highway is a bigger 69 KV transmission line as well.
 - g. Traffic/Transportation: There is a working railroad in section 15 Lanesburgh Township where trains run many times daily. The line would cross over the tracks in this section. There was information regarding possible issues with railroads in the application book. Crop Dusters may have issues and crop dusters are used in this area. There is also an airport near Webster which I know had concerns.
 - h. Safety and Health: EMF's are a concern for everyone including those on the alternate route. The alternate route follows small and narrow county and township roads where homes were allowed to be close to the road. Given that the road itself is narrow and the home can be close to the road it should be clear that there is not much area to work with compared to following a larger road where there is more right of way to begin with. There are many concerns about electric fences, fuel tanks, grain dryers, metal grain bins, metal sheds, large older tractors and combines that can all have affects from the high voltage lines. In many areas this

would pass extremely close or over these structures. During construction there would be dust and traffic issues. We have a developmentally challenged adult living on the farm. We also have asthma issues as well.

- i. Noise- Many people in the rural areas keep their windows open all spring, summer and fall so noise would be heard from the lines.
2. Natural Environment:
 - a. Air Quality/Climate
 - b. Geology/Soils- We have prime ag land being threatened. The rich soil is perfect to grow beautiful crops. We know of other farmers who have had to deal with projects like this(just this past winter) and have had many issues with soil compaction. With large equipment there is no denying that the ground will become compacted and there is significant research that shows this will affect the yield for many years to come. It makes no sense to be affecting entire fields to get into the middle of them to place poles. When maintenance is needed, perhaps in the middle of a growing season the fields will be disrupted again for generations to come.
 - c. Water Resources- This line would affect wetland areas all along the area, would cross streams and cut through marshes. Many are also wondering how this will affect their private well.
 - d. Wetlands- The DNR/University of MN and private homeowners have all made attempts to maintain areas for natural preservation for wildlife. Documentation for most areas was submitted in public comments regarding this. This should be highly considered when doing an EIS.
 - e. Biological Resources- Eagle nests and birds have been witnessed where the lines would be placed, in addition to many species of animals and birds that make their homes in the ever decreasing natural areas. The increase in housing in the area has really made the areas that are left natural very desirable and vulnerable.

Economic and Land Use Resources

- a. Agriculture-touched on above already but very important as these are not only family farms but businesses as well. There is also a tree farm(Al Dietz). The alternate route in these counties takes a hard hit at the farm fields and the natural areas when it cuts cross country. It doesn't make sense to further hurt the agriculture sector when it is up against so much already and should be preserved.
- b. Forestry- Again going cross country would deplete some natural wooded areas. These counties were part of the "Big Woods".
- c. Mining- I am not familiar with the mining in this area.
- d. Recreation/Tourism- There are many places to hunt which get used heavily in the fall/winter/spring. Because the area is growing there are less and less places to hunt. Snowmobile trails run under the lines in many locations.

In discussions with many residents about this issue everyone feels that this line should be run from Brookings south on 29, east on I 90, and then north on 35W. Substations could be built closer south or follow 14/99/and wind toward 35W. Another idea was to utilize underground mitigation near populated areas. Because of the sensitivity of the Le Sueur Crossing from an Environmental standpoint, cross in Belle Plaine and if homes/schools are an issue then start underground there and utilize the proposed extension of Scott County Road 2(see map Appendix B5 Sheet CH 29-

gray line) from 169 and follow it utilizing underground as needed. If the LeSueur Crossing must be utilized there are other roads that could be used(to avoid the Pyrotechnic factory) to connect up to this County Road 2 extension. I am not as familiar with these roads but many of them on the map showed very few homes on some of them.

No matter which route you go there are going to be homes close to the road, children waiting for busses under it or playing or sleeping under it. But to criss cross through the countryside upsetting natural preserved areas, following narrow roads or no road at all, cutting through private businesses, destroying entire family farms really does not make environmental, economical or ethical sense. I would welcome any further questions anyone may have or clarifications.

Thank you for your consideration,
Jodi Prechal, Czech Country Farms, Sections 15,16, 26 Lanesburgh Township
32155 Sanborn Dr Montgomery MN 56069
952-758-4213

Dan and Jodi Prechal, Czech Country Farms
30584 State Hwy 13
New Prague, MN 56069
952-758-4213

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing this letter with the concern over property we own and currently farm in Lanesburg Township sections 15 and 16, however we are concerned about the sections around this area as well. This concerns docket number ET-2 E002/CN-06-1115. I feel as though I am writing with a double edged sword as our current residence is also under consideration which is located at 32155 Sanborn Dr. Montgomery. This is where we currently live (County Road 28), however we own and farm the other property and have discussed the possibility of someday building a home at the above location. Our main concern is why the proposed powerline follows County Road 28 east out of Le Sueur and then diverts north and then east and south again to meet up again with County Road 28 again. I would like to make it clear that my residence is actually in the section that is being diverted and I don't necessarily want a powerline to go past my home here either, but feel that it makes no sense to ruin farms, woods and other natural areas across the township. Should this end up the final route selected, the line should continue in the rightful location along the road right of way (County Road 28 to Lonsdale) or follow a path along other section lines and existing roadways. It crosses into prime farmland and natural wetland areas and directly through our 100 year old family farm. We operate almost 80 acres of corn and soybeans. This land was founded by our Czech ancestors and handed down through many generations and will continue to be handed down to my children and their children. There is an occupied home there now, but we have plans that someday a new home could be built preferably north of the existing building site, perhaps even by our children. We have also discussed the possibility of wind generation of our own. I was saddened to look online and see exactly where this line was being proposed and even more saddened after attending the meeting and finding out there is a wide area on each side of the line that would be the right of way of the line and no new homes could ever be built in this area. So now out of almost 100 acres, there is really no desirable place left for a new home or windmill to ever be built. The land has wetland areas as well and is divided by a highway, a creek and bordered by a railroad. Stray voltage for cattle is also a concern that this powerline brings to farmers as well. It is also easy to say that a pole could be in the middle of a field, however the impact will be felt by that farmer every time they have to try to go around poles with large equipment. As just one example of this, it would involve getting off the tractor to adjust the planter many times to get the planting completed. Combines are not easy to maneuver either.

We are also concerned about the lack of knowledge as to what Phases 2 and 3 entail. We asked at the meeting but the rep did not know. We are concerned about the possibility of even more lines continuing to cut through our farm. We would like to know what the future plans are if Phase 1 is approved.

This past weekend we drove the route that this line is being proposed and hope that you have representatives that actually get out and visit the areas you are proposing to go

through and not just look at aerial maps. When we drove the route we could not imagine a huge towering powerline cutting through all the beautiful farms and natural areas, as well as right through property owner's yards. Some of these homeowners actually paid a significant amount of money to bury the lines around their home so they would not have to see them. Now imagine the feeling they have that a 175 foot pole with 8 wires could be going through that same property. We also drove County Road 28 from the point it diverts into the countryside to the point it comes back to 28 and it is true that there are homes along this road, which there are homes along the entire stretch of 28 anyhow. Many of the homes where it is being diverted have homes that are set back quite a way or their view is blocked by trees. There are also long stretches where there are no homes at all or just a few. Some stretches also have no powerlines at all. An existing roadway right of way is quite honestly, the better option if the need is approved as those homeowners are already living with existing lines. But to go through sections of townships does not make sense. The growth of New Prague is pushing south all the time. In fact the city has annexed property not too far north of the farm. With this in mind, generations from now the cities of New Prague and Montgomery will likely be one.. If the growth potential or number of homes along County Road 28 is too great then perhaps looking at a different location altogether would be a solution. Perhaps the location north of New Prague would be better suited for this or perhaps more research should be done on this entire project. Maybe there is a better way to deliver and transport the power. In addition, the CapX Project has all along said this to deliver wind power, but in fact after I did some research, found that over half of the energy is actually coming from coal burning plants, which we do not support. Coal burning plants emit large amounts of toxins into our environment, polluting it even more than it is already and adding to the effects of global warming. We worry about the future of my children and their children to have to live in a world that we are destroying. We talk about leaving our environmental footprints behind...what type of footprint would be left with towering poles and wires stretching across the countryside? I will leave you with a photo we took of our children a few years back. They are innocently looking across the farm that one day they will inherit. Our son especially lives and breathes for John Deere and farming. Please remember that when you make the decisions for this project that you are not just impacting the land itself but hopes and dreams of actual people. Please contact us anytime at 952-758-4213 or mrsprchal@aol.com to further discuss this. Thank You, Dan and Jodi Prchal and children



Looking west across the land....